

# DoD Uses More "Tools" to Shape Civilian Workforce

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WASHINGTON, Jan. 17, 2002—DoD is getting "more tools in its toolkit" to properly shape an aging civilian workforce, a senior personnel official said.

Roughly 18,000 employees retired in 2001, and officials estimate 20,000 will take the plunge this year, said Jack Schrader, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Civilian Personnel policy. He said as many as 24,000 people per year may retire by 2007. Retirements account for roughly half of the personnel attrition DoD deals with in a given year.

"We need to try to shape those losses to make sure that critical employees stay around long enough to transition the knowledge that they have to newer employees that are coming up through the ranks," Schrader said.

He said it's also critical that the Department hire the right people with the right skills into the right jobs. "The focus needs to be on how to manage the attrition and then managing the filling of those vacancies, to make sure we don't do it in a nonfocused way," Schrader said.

To do this, DoD is employing several strategies to boost recruitment.

Statutory changes in recent years allow retired military members to take civil service jobs without having their federal civilian salary being offset for their military retirement pay. Schrader said officials hope this will make civil service a more attractive option for military retirees.

"Retired military are at an age where they have many productive years ahead of them,"

he said. "They have skills and are trained in a lot of our mission-critical areas."

Civil service human-resource managers have typically relied on a "military model" for recruitment. Schrader said this meant hiring people for entry-level jobs and then "growing" them into higher-level positions within their departments. DoD is now looking to attract individuals in middle- or upper-level private sector jobs.

"Where people have skills that perhaps aren't critical skills any longer, we're putting resources toward training and retraining them into the skill areas we need," he said.

"A lot of times the skills we need are the same skills the private sector is after also," he said. To be a more competitive recruiter, DoD has added perks new employees can qualify for, Schrader said. These include paying off student loans up to \$40,000, paying recruitment bonuses up to 25 percent of the first year's salary, and paying for professional credentials.

Government employment traditionally has been considered more stable than private-sector employment. Schrader said this stability attracts a lot of prospective employees.

He also said many young people are attracted by the prospect of serving their country. "We need to remind people that service to the nation is a good cause," he said. "With recent events, I think that that probably is even more of a selling point."

**Editor's Note:** This information is in the public domain at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news>.